INTELLIGENT ADVANCEMENT

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Chairman of Publication Committee

Intelligent Advancement

Character of Literature

"Kenneth, Oh, Kenneth, have you something precious in that package?"

"No, Nothing But Tracts."

Now Kenneth was the errand boy of the Literature Department and his questioner had every reason to believe that the package, fresh from the printer, contained one of her literary effusions.

The question and the answer express a difference in valuation of our literature very near akin to the attitude of our constituency—either sincere appreciation or indifference.

"Nothing But Tracts," is representative in another sense. There are those who do not know that we publish anything but tracts. It did not appear to some of us that we publish tracts at all, as our beautifully illustrated leaflets differ so materially from the tracts of our grandfathers. But Webster's definition is "a short treatise on practical religion," therefore this definition covers many of our publications. However much we may differ in the name, our list now comprises not only leaflets of instruction, information, devotion, narrative, but pamphlets, books, lectures, maps, pictures and postal cards.

Encouraged by the demand for high-grade literature, our aim has been not to put forth a quantity so large that it would lower the standard of quality. At the present time we are publishing pamphlets and books of history and biography which will attract any one who reads the history of his country. **High-Grade Material**

The 14,035 letters received this last year by the department show the substantial appreciation of our literature. We are especially grateful for the practical evidence of an abiding interest by the churches of smaller cities and rural districts. The past success is an incentive to press the importance of our literature upon our constituency and to put forth a vigorous effort for still greater recognition.

I do not wish to claim too much for the department, and desire to take such a conservative view that those who heretofore have given the literature little or no thought may at least extend to it earnest consideration.

The age of the Literature Department should be some indication of its worth. It came into existence the same day as the Woman's Board, and while the man who died at one hundred and three was noted for nothing but his age, a missionary literature department would not have been allowed to live, unless it had been demonstrated that it existed for a pur- **Age of Department**

pose. A tangible interest has been continually apparent and the receipts have regularly increased. The advancement each year can be definitely stated in figures, *except*, by the diffusion of information, it has been an important factor in enlarging the home mission treasury, the amount of which cannot be computed.

It has not been a coddled child. No one has remembered it with a special gift for the promulgation of literature. Like most restricted children, it has had visions of what it might do, if it had to do with. It has been conducted on the most economical plan and has survived and grown by real merit and achievement.

Source of Supply

The contributors to our department are those best conversant with the conditions on the field. Their statements, unlike much of the printed matter of to-day, are absolutely truthful, affording the reader a basis of information which he does not need to verify. The authors have written for love of the cause, and a large majority have gladly responded to our requests "without money and without price."

Estimate of Worth

The recipients of our literature, expressive of appreciation, are not infrequently the clergy of the Presbyterian Church, an educated and critical body, whose favorable opinion we highly esteem.

Recently a Presbyterian minister who has accepted a call to another denomination, revisited the department, stating that he found his best material with us.

Professor Phelps, of Yale, not long ago said, the final test of literature was the "spinal thrill." We claim for our literature not the spinal thrill of idle tears, or that which simply stimulates the intellect, but the spinal thrill which touches the heart and makes it a little more tender and sympathetic toward all mankind.

Intelligent Use

If the foregoing statements be correct, is it not reasonable to suppose that a wise and practical use of our literature would be a most influential factor in the prospective forward movement? In fact, "it is absolutely indispensable to the intelligent prosecution of home mission work." I think we can prove that those societies which use our maps and literature; the officers who carefully read our books of instruction; the young people who take up systematic study with an occasional stereopticon lecture; a combined praise meeting in which all the church societies unite, and the individual daily use of our Prayer Calendar, are the societies which make intelligent use of our aids and report continuous advancement.

The expression, *intelligent use,* was employed advisedly. Each society differs

in condition and environment, so that any stated plan is subject to much change. Otherwise it robs the society of originality and the healthy exercise of adapting our aids to its own program. How refreshing it has been to go into many societies in the West, far from home, and find bright, active-minded women using our literature and thinking, planning and perfecting a meeting the result of which we have never seen excelled.

A Little Leaven

However, this general rule as to the use of our literature may be worthy of consideration. The best results are obtained by amplifying a part of the subject and not attempting to cover the whole theme at one time. The Bible-school teachers who take character studies one winter; religious another; the young people who give an entire season to the Alaskan field, another to the Mexican, etc., are those who give and acquire information that is retained. A mother using this method found a single paragraph in "Indian Child Life,"—that little Indians are not cruel to animals, was quite sufficient with amplifications for the children's Sabbath afternoon talk until she made a half dozen talks on that one booklet; thus giving information at retail and not wholesale.

Literature a Solid Foundation

What do you do at your missionary society? was asked a little girl. "Oh, we get all the money we can and send it to

New York." Now, in a sense that statement is true, and yet every missionary leader wishes that not only the little girl but those of larger growth had a higher idea of the object of a missionary society. *To make it a mere collection agency is to reduce the meeting to a materialistic basis too common in all American life.* The woman who gives her money to mission work is greatly valued, but the woman is also valued who attends the meetings and presents an idea culled from our literature, because such interest will bring forth fruit both material and spiritual, that will not fluctuate with unsteady impulses or personal expenses.

Individual Aid

At the close of a recent annual meeting two women passed the literature tables. "This reminds me of our Secretary of Literature at home," said one to the other. "She arranges her literature very artistically and makes a pretty display at our meetings as well as giving a breezy review of the new leaflets. I am a busy woman and I depend upon our enthusiastic secretary for information, and then *I talk it up.*" A shade of disappointment crossed the heart of the listener, for personal knowledge seemed so vital to her, and then she reflected, one always has something for which to be thankful. In different sections of our country to put up fruit and to put down fruit mean the same thing. In literature, "talking it

up" in any section is very different from talking it down. Therefore, as a final plea, *buy, read* and *talk up* our literature.

This department has almost a human personality. It is exceedingly sensitive to *indifference,* but if sufficiently encouraged there would be no limit to the efforts it would make to supply the needs and meet the expectations of those depending upon it.

WOMEN OF OUR LOCAL, PRESBYTERIAL AND SYNODICAL SOCIETIES, IS OUR LITERATURE "NOTHING TO YOU, ALL YE THAT PASS BY?"

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